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COUNTRY Africa

CIA

SUBJECT Establishment of African Trans-Ocean Airlines /PTY/ Ltd. DATE 18 Aug 53

PLACE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE) AfricaDATE ACQUIRED Jul - Aug 53
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SUPPLEMENT TO:

DATE (OF INFO) 5 Aug 53

RESPONSIVE TO:

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It does not warrant dissemination by [REDACTED]

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Source or Clarifying Statement: [REDACTED]

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1. In July 1953 the African Trans-Ocean Airlines (PTY) Ltd, /ATA/ made application to the Union of South Africa National Transportation Commission /NTC/, similar to US Aeronautical Board/. They want a license to operate a service between Johannesburg and the US, to include:
 - a. Service to the USA
 - b. Service to Europe
 - c. Non-scheduled service wherever the traffic may warrant
2. At a hearing held in July 1953, the NTC refused ATA permission to establish a route to Europe. This refusal was the result of opposition by the South African Airways. However, NTC reserved their decision on the proposed service of ATA to the US and on the proposed non-scheduled operations.
3. The following information concerning the personnel and financial background of ATA was secured [REDACTED] in South Africa. The main shareholders are: Col P R Preller, a former member of NTC; Gen A F von Mellenthin, a former staff officer of General Rommel. Von Mellenthin is also very much interested in an organization known as the German South African Airlines. This latter company does not own aircraft, but hires them, usually DC-3s, as necessary from local /South African/ licensed non-scheduled airline operators. Other members of ATA are Dr Diedericks, a member of parliament; Dr Jan Piennar, of Volkskas, a banker; Prof Hoek, an economist; Commandant D Loftus, formerly a senior officer of the South African Air Force; and Captain Oeschger, formerly with KLM Airlines. ATA is endeavoring to secure financial backing from South African shipping companies. This effort on their part is believed to be meeting with some success. The South African Marine Corporation (Safmarine), whose local /South African/ manager is Fred Bamford is considering financing ATA. Safmarine's US principal is believed to be [REDACTED]. It is understood Safmarine is willing to lose money for two years' operations of ATA as they believe aviation transportation will in the future become even more important. They are anxious to get a start in an airline operation to supplement their ocean shipping business.
4. Two difficulties face ATA. One is getting their routes established where the anticipated traffic will make a profitable operation possible, and the other is getting their routes approved by NTC. At present one planned route is Johannesburg to Elizabethville to Luanda to Recife to Trinidad and then to Miami, New Orleans, or New York. Another planned route would be along the West Coast of Africa to Dakar, then to the Azores and then to the US. This latter route is not believed to be economically practical. The most practical route, which they are now considering and will try to secure approval for, is traffic rights to Europe with the possibility of using Amsterdam as a takeoff point for the US. In order to secure approval for this latter proposed route, I believe they will need a lot of support from some large airline carrier.

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